



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



# DESIGNING OUT HOMELESSNESS: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR BUSINESS

2019



**A toolkit for employers on how to prevent, offer help  
and create pathways out of homelessness.**

In partnership with:



**Mayor of the  
West Midlands**





# CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORDS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>POSITIVE PATHWAYS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>REFRAMING HOMELESSNESS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BUSINESS CASE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PREVENTION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GOOD WORK FOR ALL</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PRACTICAL HELP</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>27</b>

# FOREWORDS

**Drawn from the work of the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce, these practical steps are designed for employers to take action to prevent homelessness, offer help to organisations tackling it and provide pathways to employment in their businesses.**

## FOREWORD BY ANDY STREET, MAYOR OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

During my time as managing director of John Lewis, I came to realise that business has a wider purpose, both in how it employs people and in how it can play a key role in the community to do good. Drawing on evidence of what works locally and nationally, I believe that access to good employment can act as a preventative measure as well as a sustainable route out of homelessness.

When I was elected as Mayor in May 2017, one of my first actions was to set up the Homelessness Taskforce. The purpose of the Taskforce has been to ensure we are drawing on all of our collective resources to design out homelessness.

**There is a huge amount of good work being done to tackle homelessness, but there is much more that can be done. Through embedding homelessness prevention within an organisation's day-to-day business, employers can be an important part of the solution.**

This new resource is part of the Homelessness Taskforce's programme of work to design out homelessness and rough sleeping across the West Midlands and nationally. For the first time we have brought together the practical steps that businesses can take to help prevent and tackle homelessness.

Within your businesses, I encourage you to consider as employers how you can implement the actions set out in this toolkit to prevent homelessness within your workforce, give practical help to your employees when issues arise, and create pathways to employment for people who have experienced homelessness.

Working together, we have the opportunity to prevent and design out homelessness.



**Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands**

## FOREWORD BY AMANDA MACKENZIE, BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

**Everyone needs a decent, secure place to live. It's the springboard which allows us to thrive in other areas of our lives such as our work, education and relationships.**

So, it's startling that in the UK, one in four people who are homeless or facing homelessness are in paid employment. This isn't right and it raises the question, what can employers do to help prevent it?

Business in the Community has worked with the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce and national partners to answer this question.

Firstly, they can start removing the stigma of homelessness, raising awareness of the impact and how it can be prevented.

Homelessness can be isolating but it's not an isolated problem. When businesses take responsibility in their communities and for their employees it can have a profound impact.

Secondly, create good work for all – ensuring fair pay, development, structure and security for employees. Provide crucial mental health support when employees are struggling; remove barriers in the recruitment process, provide work experience and offer practical help through voluntary work or work placement programmes so

that we can get people affected by homelessness back into the workplace.

Homelessness is not inevitable and the sooner we act, the sooner we can change lives.



**Amanda Mackenzie**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Business in the Community**



## FOREWORD BY LORNA GAVIN, GOWLING WLG

**The private sector currently makes up over 83% of the UK workforce and this means that businesses can have a huge impact on breaking the cycle of homelessness.**

No-one is immune to the pressures that can lead to homelessness. Many of us have experienced insecure housing and relationship breakdown and, without the right support, pressures like these can build into a crisis. That's why it's been a pleasure to work with the West Midlands Combined Authority's Homelessness Taskforce and Business in the Community to identify ways that businesses can help at every stage of the homelessness cycle.

We know that the business community wants to help – but we desperately need to think beyond offering help to people in crisis and about how we can support employees who may be vulnerable to homelessness before they reach that crisis point.

In the same way that businesses have moved the dial on mental health we need to remove the stigma associated with homelessness – let's start talking about the 'H' word!

When we do help people in crisis – particularly rough sleepers – let's make sure we do it in the right ways, working in partnership with the experts so that we can be sure our help is going to give rough sleepers the best chance of getting off the streets and moving on to safe, sustainable independent living.

We also need to help people who have experienced homelessness get back into the

workplace. This part is critical to breaking the homelessness cycle and it is something that we as employers are perfectly placed to do.

Through Gowling WLG's support of Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme, I have seen for myself the power of employability support and work to change the course of people's lives. Offering good work that provides stability and structure, fair pay and benefits, and training and development opportunities can support both existing employees who find themselves under pressure and people who are trying to get their lives back on track.

This resource – covering prevention, practical help, and pathways to employment – is just what we need to get started.



**Lorna Gavin**  
**Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Corporate Responsibility**  
**Gowling WLG**

# INTRODUCTION

Homelessness – visible and invisible – is rising across the UK. It takes many forms, from families living in temporary accommodation to couples and individuals sleeping on friends’ sofas, in hostels or on the streets.

## **1 IN 4 PEOPLE FACING HOMELESSNESS ARE IN WORK. Businesses are well placed to prevent homelessness.**

Having a decent and secure place to live is the springboard from which we can go on to thrive in other areas of our lives like work, education and relationships. Homelessness is an issue not only for government and the charitable sector but one for employers around the country.

People become homeless for a wide range of complex reasons that involve structural factors. For instance high housing costs combined with pressures from their personal circumstances such as mental health difficulties and relationship breakdown. As people face mounting pressures and financial insecurity, responsible employers can play a role in preventing these pressures from turning into a crisis.

The West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce uses the idea of ‘designing out homelessness’ – a perpetual, intentional process influencing mainstream systems. This sees the prevention of homelessness built into policies, systems, structures and organisations.

Offering good work – including fair pay and benefits; job security and flexibility; and training and progression opportunities – can prevent homelessness among existing staff and provide

the environment for new starters to sustain employment.

People in employment who are faced with homelessness can be supported through this difficult period with the right structures in place. People who are looking for work, especially those from groups who are often excluded from employment, can – with the right pathways – be supported into work which can reduce their chances of becoming homeless. Many people who have experienced homelessness want to work and see working as the best way out of homelessness. Unstable housing makes it difficult enough to hold down a job, but more subtle barriers remain for people even once they have

## National vision

Crisis, the national charity for homeless people, has described what the world will look like once the aim of ending homelessness has been achieved.

- No one sleeping rough
- No one forced to live in transient, dangerous or unfit accommodation
- No one in emergency accommodation without a plan for rapid rehousing
- No one homeless as a result of leaving a state institution
- All at risk of homelessness get the help needed to prevent it
- Structural factors that contribute to homelessness are addressed
- No one experiences homelessness more than once.

stable accommodation. However, they too can be supported into work through positive pathways that help to remove structural and individual barriers. For example, gaps in employment and address histories can cause employers to overlook candidates and some people will have other barriers such as a physical disability or mental health condition, a criminal record or debt.

### About this toolkit

This toolkit is based on the pioneering work of the West Midlands Homelessness Taskforce, experiences of a range of different employers and homelessness sector organisations across England and Wales, as well as Business in the Community's learning from almost 20 years of supporting people who have experienced homelessness into work.

It includes practical steps employers can take to:

- **prevent** homelessness
- **help** homelessness organisations support people in crisis
- **create pathways** into employment.

These are illustrated with case study examples of businesses and charities innovating in these areas.

**The checklist in the centre pages offers business actions in each of these areas, while the case studies offer inspiration and a blueprint for how it can be done.**

Finally, it shows how businesses can take a pivotal role – alongside government and civil society – in designing out homelessness for good.

### Positive Pathways Model

The West Midlands Positive Pathways model (below) identifies the interventions whole systems can offer to people who are at risk of, or facing homelessness.

It is not a linear pathway, but a way to ensure the right support is available when and where it is needed. Government, the voluntary sector and the private sector all have a role to play to prevent homelessness and provide support where it does occur.

Businesses can have an impact at different points in this pathway to prevent, provide help and create pathways to employment.

## POSITIVE PATHWAYS MODEL





## Reframing homelessness

In order to tackle the problem of homelessness, it is crucial to deal with stigma, both in the workplace and wider society. A piece of research carried out by Crisis and a consortium of other homeless charities identified the critical role that public perceptions have in building support and political commitment to take action. This research highlighted some commonly held misconceptions which were:

- Rough sleeping is the only form of homelessness
- Homelessness affects a specific type of person
- Homelessness is seen more as a result of poor life choices rather than structural factors
- People think homelessness is inevitable and a social problem that can't be solved<sup>1</sup>

These misconceptions around homelessness only serve to increase stigma and reinforce the idea that nothing can be done about homelessness. Businesses can have an important role to play by addressing these misconceptions, removing stigma and raising awareness, and using appropriate language in communications around homelessness.

For example, rather than labelling people as “the homeless.” Use the phrase “people experiencing homelessness”. Similarly, don't refer to people dealing with addiction as “addicts.” It is not a permanent state; it is a human struggle and an illness.

For support on how to talk about homelessness, see [Crisis' guide](#).

## More than rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the visible tip of the iceberg but there are many hidden forms of homelessness that are harder to see and measure. These could include whole families in temporary accommodation, young people sleeping on friends' sofas or refugees in hostels. Shelter's 'iceberg' metaphor highlights how homelessness affects people beyond rough sleeping.





## The business case

One in four people who are homeless or facing homelessness are in work. This means that before they got to crisis point, there was potential for their employer to take action. Recognising the relationship between the challenges people face, the programmes and support employers have in place, and the occurrences of homelessness means employers will be better able to relieve pressure and provide stability for employees who may be facing homelessness.

For those who do become homeless, having a supportive employer can make all the difference to their ability to get back on their feet.

Homelessness affects businesses in a range of ways, from absenteeism and presenteeism of employees who may be facing homelessness to staff and customer concerns about people rough sleeping near or on business premises.

The cost to the workplace is substantial, though difficult to determine accurately. However, research estimates suggest that absence and presenteeism costs the UK around £73 billion a year in lost productivity<sup>ii</sup>.

However, businesses working to prevent homelessness, offer practical support and provide pathways to employment can benefit from employee engagement and creating a pipeline of diverse talent.

Business benefits include:

- **Reducing recruitment costs** – working in partnership with the JobCentre Plus and third sector organisations can be a cost-effective way to find talent without having to pay expensive recruitment agency fees.
- **Increasing staff retention** – finding loyal employees can bring significant savings and businesses that employ excluded groups report lower turnover among those groups.
- **Reducing absence** – offering good work with fair pay, job security and training and development opportunities can have a positive effect on absenteeism and presenteeism.
- **Upskilling your existing workforce** – providing pre-employment or in-work support for excluded groups can create volunteering opportunities for your existing workforce. This will help them to gain transferable skills that will benefit your business.
- **Increasing staff engagement** – business volunteers on Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme reported a 74% increase in job satisfaction
- **Improving client relationships and boosting corporate reputation** – 65% of organisations taking part in inclusive employment projects reported this had a positive impact on their corporate reputation.
- **Addressing staff shortages** – in a time of high employment, where many employers are finding it hard to fill vacancies, widening your talent pool through working in partnership with support organisations to consider candidates who may have been homeless can be part of your inclusive recruitment strategy.

# PREVENTION

The risk of homelessness is not an issue that exists outside of businesses' control. Recent figures showed that 25% of people in the UK who were homeless or facing homelessness were in paid employment<sup>iii</sup>. As well as the obvious human costs, research has shown that successful preventative measures cost much less than allowing homelessness to become sustained or repeated<sup>iv</sup>.

For employees who are facing homelessness, employers should recognise that the process of seeking help from local authorities and other services may involve time off for appointments. By allowing employees to use flexible working arrangements or offering additional leave could make the difference between the employee keeping their home or becoming homeless.

Shelter offers an 'Employee Housing Health Check' to help businesses understand how the housing emergency is affecting their workforce. Their research into in-work homelessness shows that more than half of the families living in temporary accommodation are actually in work.

Shelter's Housing Health Check can help employers to understand their employees' housing struggles before they reach crisis point. This makes the workplace a safe place to talk about housing issues and a place where employees can get the advice and support they need to prevent homelessness. To find out more email [corporate@shelter.org.uk](mailto:corporate@shelter.org.uk)

## Homelessness prevention and workplace wellbeing

There are clear links between some of the factors contributing to homelessness and the kinds of issues human resources teams often encounter in the workplace. Recognising these and having support in place can be the difference between someone losing or keeping their home as well as their job.

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**21%**

of homeless people cite mental health problems as a reason for homelessness

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**61%**

of homeless women have experienced violence or abuse from a partner

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**1 in 3**

people seen rough sleeping in 2015 to 2016 had experience of serving time in prison

## Good Work for All

Employers should review what is already in place in their organisation and what more they could do to help support and protect employees. This applies to people they employ directly and those who are part of their supply chains.

Learning from Business in the Community's Good Work for All programme<sup>v</sup> shows that it's important to first get the basics right. The Resolution Foundation recently found that 23% of people aged 25 and under were being paid below the legal minimums set by the Government and that one in 20 workers received no paid holiday. As of 2018, there are also over 6 million jobs in the UK which are currently paid below the Living Wage (as set by the Living Wage Foundation).

Before implementing good work interventions we recommend employers ensure they are paying

the correct wage or salary, on time; are providing employees with the right physical environment, tools and training to do the job; have clear contracts in place; include sickness and holiday pay; and treat all employees with respect and dignity at work.

Beyond this, preventing the risk of homelessness for your employees can be done by strengthening the quality of work on offer. Business in the Community's Good Work for All action plan provides a way to review the quality of work and support offered across three key areas:

- **Fair pay and benefits:** pay a fair wage and support employees to manage the costs of living
- **Skills and development:** maximise job security and review the structure and content of roles
- **Security and structure:** provide accessible progression pathways and equip employees with skills

Find out more and download the action plan at [www.bitc.org.uk/goodwork](http://www.bitc.org.uk/goodwork)



## Mental health and wellbeing

Problems with mental health and wellbeing are strongly correlated with an increased risk of homelessness. The increased visibility and awareness of mental health issues in society has raised the profile of mental health in the workplace. With 61% of employees reporting mental health problems as a result of work, it is crucial that businesses act to support their employees<sup>vi</sup>.

However, there are lots of things that businesses can do to support the mental health of their employees and Business in the Community has issued the following call to action as part of our mental health campaign:

- **TALK:** break the culture of silence that surrounds mental health by signing the [Time to Change Pledge](#)
- **TRAIN:** invest in basic mental health literacy for all employees and first aid training in mental health to support line manager capability
- **TAKE ACTION:** implement practical actions from BITC [Mental Health Toolkit for Employers](#)

It is important to understand the intersection where pay meets wellbeing, especially as money problems are a major causal factor of homelessness. Supporting employees to manage their finances, and to have the capacity to absorb economic shocks, and pursue longer-term financial goals can have a huge impact.

Business in the Community's Workwell model provides a framework for embedding wellbeing into workplaces. Visit <https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/workwellmodel>

## Spotlight on Starbucks

Starbucks regularly consults with partners through its employee survey 'Partner voice'. In 2015, this survey showed that because many Starbucks stores operate in large cities, partners were struggling with high living costs. At the same time, the business was looking to address turnover rates. Responding to these two challenges, Starbucks began to explore options to help partners manage their living costs.

This idea was then tested out at a focus group and with resounding support from partners, Starbucks launched its Home Sweet Loan initiative in May 2016, becoming the first private sector company to launch a rental deposit scheme.

Home Sweet Loan offers an interest-free loan to Starbucks partners working in company-owned stores who have been with the business for six months or more. This is to contribute to the costs of a rental deposit when moving home, or sub-letting a room. Starbucks always wanted to evolve and enhance the scheme and after a first-year review decided to open it up to those partners on a reduced tenure (previously set at 12 months and now reduced to 6 months) and those looking to sub-let rather than rent directly themselves from a landlord.

Communicating Home Sweet Loans was something that Starbucks considers to be one of the most important factors in the success of the programme. They also ensured that support and information was available everywhere from store managers to district managers to the support centre meant the application process was as easy as possible.

As the scheme continues to grow, the benefits for Starbucks partners is already beginning to emerge with an increased retention rate for those who have taken up the loan.

## Spotlight on Gowling WLG

Gowling WLG describe their work on homelessness as “a holistic approach – that incorporates prevention, crisis support, and good work”. As well as working with the Business in the Community Ready for Work programme, providing over 140 work placements since 2004, Gowling also partners with homelessness charities to support those in crisis. Now, Gowling is aiming to prevent homelessness as part of its wellbeing programme for employees including support for those affected by mental health issues and domestic violence. Lorna Gavin, Head of Diversity, Inclusion, & Corporate Responsibility explains:

*“We have done a lot around mental health and domestic violence, which are both significant risk factors for homelessness. Our approach is to raise awareness, build resilience, and give support through mental health and domestic violence champions, our Employee Assistance Programme and other services. We’ve learned that it is critical to create a culture that helps people feel safe to ask for help to address problems as they arise and crucially before it reaches crisis point where someone might end up losing their home”.*

Since implementing their programme of domestic violence support they have supported more than 15 women, from all business levels, who have disclosed they are enduring domestic violence – the support provided by Gowling has allowed them to stay in employment.

By supporting people who are living with mental health issues or enduring domestic abuse, the firm is tackling two of the key risk factors for people losing their homes.

Now they are planning programmes around financial wellbeing, bereavement and substance misuse – all risk factors. Alongside this, the firm is a Living Wage Foundation employer, helping to mitigate against the risk of poverty related homelessness for employees and contractors. These initiatives are part of Gowling’s broader programme of culture change within the organisation where issues that may be subject to stigma – such as mental health, domestic violence, or risk of homelessness – can be talked about within the workplace.

*“We have made huge improvements in removing stigma in mental health, we are less far down the road with homelessness but we realise that we are on a journey. One of the biggest things that helps to change mindsets is employees getting involved with volunteering, [people] always come and say ‘oh aren’t they normal’ and we just say ‘yes of course they are – no one is immune from this stuff!”*

*“We do openly talk about homelessness, not in an individual context but in terms of our community work. We mention it in inductions as well as something that we actively support. People are quite comfortable now saying “I’m at Gowling WLG and we support homelessness charities” but our goal is to get to a place where people say “I’m at Gowling WLG, and we support our people to help prevent them from becoming homeless”.*

### **Practical steps checklist**

Use the checklist overleaf to identify what your business can do to ‘design out’ homelessness.

# PREVENT

## PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUR EMPLOYEES

- Make sure you provide **good work for all**, ensuring job security, rights and a fair income.
- Offer **mental health support** through workplace initiatives and employee assistance programmes.
- Recognise the symptoms of **substance misuse** and put support in place to help employees address it.
- Know how to spot signs of **domestic abuse** and how to support employees who may be affected.
- Talk about homelessness in the workplace, raising awareness to combat stigma around **poverty, debt and financial exclusion**.
- Support employees in times of **relationship breakdown, bereavement and trauma**.
- Offer opportunities and remove barriers for **people with criminal convictions**.
- Understand the problem of **modern slavery** and act to stop it in communities and supply chains.

## OFFER PRACTICAL HELP TO TACKLE THE ISSUES

- Equip your employees** with the knowledge and resources to understand homelessness and know how best to respond e.g. signposting to StreetLink and local services.
- Encourage employees** to fundraise, donate and support alternative giving schemes.
- Support charities tackling homelessness and its causes by **giving financially** as part of your responsible business strategy.
- Create strategic charity partnerships to support projects through **skills-based employee volunteering**, for example with offering legal, financial, insurance, marketing and IT expertise.
- Consider what products or services your business may be able to **give in kind** either to directly support homeless people or to provide much-needed resources to charities.

# HELP



## CREATE PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT IN YOUR BUSINESS

**Remove barriers** in your recruitment process, such as asking about criminal convictions in the first stage of the process, requiring unnecessary qualifications, using jargon-filled job descriptions and requesting comprehensive address histories.

Partner with charities to support their efforts to **get people ready for work**, for example through helping with CVs and interview skills or outlining expectations in the workplace.

Provide a **chance for jobseekers to see inside your workplace** to hear from staff members about the jobs they do, their career pathway and opportunities with your organisation.

**Offer work placements or work experience** to give people direct experience in the workplace, helping them build confidence and gain an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

**Offer apprenticeships** to people of all ages, providing a way to learn on the job and start on a new career pathway.

**Offer jobs through charities or specialist recruiters** to enable you to reach people who may have experienced homelessness.

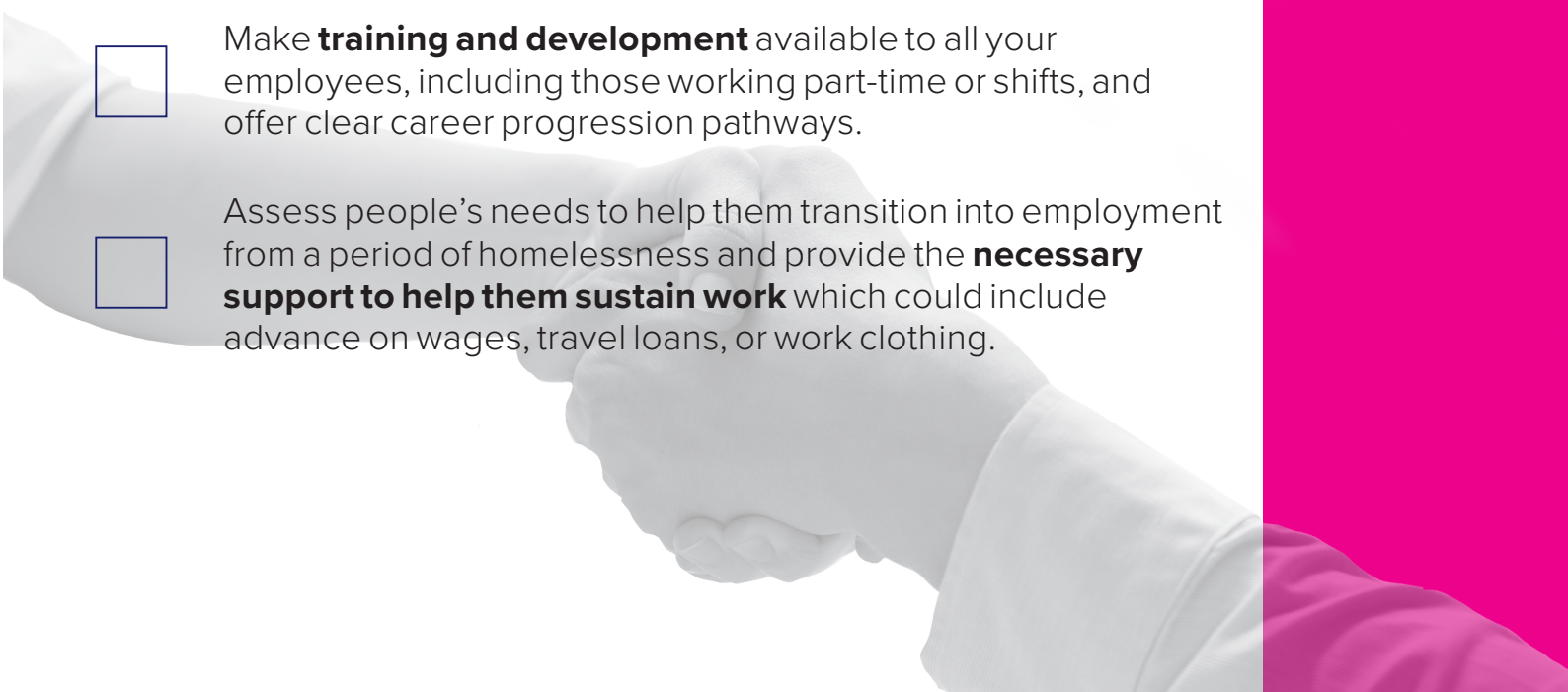
Ensure your jobs **offer fair pay and in-work benefits** that would be of most benefit to people rebuilding their lives.

Ensure you provide **job security, certainty of hours and flexibility** to enable employees to plan and fit in their outside commitments.

Make **training and development** available to all your employees, including those working part-time or shifts, and offer clear career progression pathways.

Assess people's needs to help them transition into employment from a period of homelessness and provide the **necessary support to help them sustain work** which could include advance on wages, travel loans, or work clothing.

# CREATE PATHWAYS





## PRACTICAL HELP

While prevention is perhaps the most effective way businesses can work to design out homelessness, there is a long way to go before homelessness is no longer an issue for business and society. Partnerships with charities and support organisations are a powerful way for businesses to provide practical help and support to those most in need. Businesses can offer skills-based volunteering, charity partnerships, employee fundraising, and in-kind donations. They can also educate and inform their employees about homelessness so that employees can make sure people experiencing homelessness can get the support they need.

### Spotlight on Deloitte

Deloitte UK's [One Million Futures](#) initiative was launched in June 2016 to help a million people get to where they want to be through access to education and employment.

Much of the impact delivered is through over 60 partnerships across the UK with schools, charities and social enterprises. These relationships are led and managed by Deloitte employees who volunteer their time to make a positive difference in the communities in which they live and work. Some of these partnerships are with organisations that provide practical help to the homeless sector.

One of the One Million Futures charity partnerships is with national homeless charity Depaul UK which wanted to expand its Nightstop service into new regions. Deloitte was able to provide pro bono services and harness its skilled workforce to support Depaul UK beyond fundraising alone. A data science team ran a heat-mapping exercise to identify Manchester as the area most in need, which in turn helped them to secure vital government funding for the project.

Colleagues from Deloitte's Manchester Real Estate office were then able to step in to help Depaul UK to secure an affordable location for the new service, close to the centre of Manchester, as well as advising on the implementation of an impact measurement framework. Simone Newman, Area Director for the North, Depaul UK, adds: *"We moved into St Peters around 18 months ago, the young people have really made it their own with a mural wall, and furniture they have made alongside the staff team. This is a safe space for young people to come and meet each other and get advice and support from the staff as well as somewhere they can spend time, have a brew and just 'be'. As well as the young people, the staff have settled into the office space, with our Greater Manchester Nightstop, Young People's Programme Team and Family Mediation workers based here. We still can't believe we managed to find such a great location, well, how Deloitte managed to help us find it! It has made such a difference to our profile in the city and we will be eternally grateful to Deloitte."*

*"We work with organisations to understand what support is going to have the most impact."* says Nicola Weir, Director of Responsible Business, Deloitte.

*"The vast range of skills of the Deloitte workforce allow us to support a number of social enterprises and charity partners to build skills and pathways to employment. We recently added eight social enterprise partners to our Deloitte pioneers programme, including Social Bite and Change Please, who both provide employment opportunities and support services for homeless people, as well as our existing partnerships with Depaul UK and 1625 Independent People."*

Another partnership was developed in Bristol with 1625 Independent People. Again, Deloitte was able to offer support to help expand the charity's services. This included over £96,000 of pro bono support including an indirect Tax Review, advice on Gift Aid, a GDPR readiness assessment as well as providing advice on impact reporting, VAT and on implementing a new HR system. Jamie Gill, Partnerships Director, 1625 Independent People said: *"The support of the local Bristol Deloitte team has made a significant difference, not only in their dedicated and ambitious fundraising (though hugely important!) but in the way they have championed our work, generated innovative ideas and working hard with us to understand our charity, the impact we make and how the pro-bono support can genuinely support this."*

These strategic charity partnerships have proved to be hugely impactful. Since launching in 2016, Deloitte's One Million Futures Programme has already impacted over 890,000 individuals.

## Charity partnerships

If a business wants to support people who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness, working with a charity or support organisation enables them to tap into specialist knowledge that can have a real impact. While ad hoc support – whether through volunteering, fundraising, or donations – will always be welcome, strategic relationships enable long-term impact.

Charitable income can be crucial to services for homeless people, and of enormous value in going beyond what may be commissioned from government. Ideally financial giving will be based on an informed relationship, knowing what is needed and why; has expectations attached that are proportionate, is part of an ongoing commitment.

Research into corporate charity partnerships has highlighted the following key challenges which should be considered:

- **Establishing an equal relationship:** traditional models create a power imbalance as the corporate is grant giver and charity is beneficiary which can lead to charities over-promising or delivering services which don't meet their needs or mission. Both sides should invest time into understanding what the other has to offer
- **Thinking beyond CSR:** charities wanted their relationships with businesses to move beyond engagement with CSR teams and provide effective support to other corporate functions
- **Designing effective volunteering:** charities prefer skilled volunteering on an ongoing basis and stated that they had problems offering this as an attractive proposition to businesses
- **Involving more partners:** businesses and charities both stated that they wanted to collaborate more widely in order to achieve greater social impact. The challenges associated with this can be overcome through effective communication, appointing a lead organisation, and pooling funds for more resources.
- **Measuring your impact:** making sure measurements and targets are proportional and focused on outcomes rather than outputs; measurement should also reflect the equal partnership and businesses should provide measurements as well as the charities<sup>vii</sup>.

This evidence matches Business in the Community's own guidance on developing effective partnerships which advises that businesses should set objectives early, undertake proper research into which charity to partner with, and ensure good communication, senior support

and time allocated for impact measurement have all been secured.

### Spotlight on Nationwide

When Nationwide Building Society wanted to refocus their social investment strategy, they went directly to their members to ask what the issues that mattered most to them were. Housing came up again and again, so that became the focus. Kirsty Hall, Social Investment Manager at Nationwide notes how this strategy fits with their history:

*“It is very much part of our core purpose – Nationwide was founded for people that couldn’t buy homes and we are now one of the biggest mortgage providers in the UK. It is so closely linked to what we do as a business so it made perfect sense really.”*

One of the issues that frequently arose for Nationwide staff was finding rough sleepers in branch doorways or fire exits, and staff did not know how to help. A partnership was formed with homeless charity St Mungo’s to develop a package of guidance and training which could be delivered for branch staff to help support and signpost to rough sleepers. After an initial pilot in Bournemouth, the training has now been rolled out nationally to over 500 employees.

This project links with HomelessWise, which is a product offered by St Mungo’s to help businesses become more informed and aware of how they can support people sleeping rough and how to signpost to local services.

*“This was very much about trying to prevent that first night out”, Kirsty says. “HomelessWise was developed so that businesses can work together to help rough sleepers get the support they need.”*

As well as equipping frontline staff, Nationwide is trialing innovative practices to prevent homelessness.

This includes a project to build 239 new homes near its HQ in Swindon, setting up a new team to lobby for changes in the private rental sector, and a £22 million community grants programme aimed at supporting local solutions to the housing crisis. It also continues to support housing and homelessness charity Shelter, whom it’s been partnered with since 2001.

In the last couple of years, over £4.2 million of Community Grants have been given to more than 100 local housing projects which have been driven by Regional Community Boards made up of members, employees, and local housing experts. Despite the big ambitions, Kirsty says that local needs are crucial – *“it needs to be relatable, so do things locally first so that it reflects the need in the area. This generates more interest and needs of the community”*.

### Skills-based volunteering

Businesses contain diverse skillsets which can be used to support charities strategically and skills-based volunteering is the most valuable kind of volunteering you can offer. Companies have identified clear benefits in developing focussed skills-based volunteering programmes with regards to staff retention, recruitment of high calibre graduates, skills development and employee training opportunities<sup>viii</sup>.

**“I didn’t have much work experience, so it was all new to me – but I knew it was an opportunity to learn...I had a buddy who went out of her way to help me.” – BITC programme participant**

## Giving in the workplace

Charities are closest to the issues they are set up to address, which means that one of the most effective ways to support their work is to give money. This includes raising money as well as collecting items charities may need, such as clothing or basic food items for shelters and kitchens. Businesses can give their employees a choice in how they contribute – some employees may not have the time, confidence, or desire to take part in skills-based volunteering, so having the option to donate or fundraise gives people more choice. There are different ways in which businesses can make donations.

### Payroll Giving

Payroll giving is a tax-free way for employees to make a regular donation to causes they care about through their pay. It's simple to set up and is an excellent way to support your employees' charitable giving. As donations are made before tax, your employee's donations will go further. For example, a £5 donation will only cost your employee £4 in real terms as charities will be getting the other £1 instead of the taxman.

To set up a scheme, contact one of the approved Payroll Giving Agencies below who will act as the liaison between your business and the charities your staff support to pass donations from their gross salary to their chosen charities.

- [Charities Aid Foundation \(CAF\)](#)
- [Charitable Giving](#)
- [Charities Trust](#)

## Spotlight on Tabor House

Birmingham closed its emergency night shelter called The Trinity many years ago and yet rough sleeping in the city has increased dramatically in recent years. Subsequently, local businessmen joined forces to help open the new emergency night shelter Tabor House in Digbeth in September 2017.

Phil Yates, Managing Director of EH Smith (Builders Merchants) Ltd, Bill Friel, Chairman of Friel Construction, Michael Lambe, Managing Director of Lambe Construction and Joe Hudson CEO of Istock PLC worked as part of a collaborative Management Team involving faith organisations and outreach team/soup kitchen organisers to establish Tabor House. The new night shelter offers refuge for between 10 and 15 clients per night with many able to stay long term to receive support to help them get back on track.

The businessmen have used their own resources to assist with funding and refurbishing the building and even offering permanent accommodation and employment opportunities. Tabor House is ultimately run by Father Hudson's Care who provide the administrative vehicle and organise over 100 volunteers to run the shelter which is crucial to its success. There are now plans to expand the project further to provide more emergency beds for more rough sleepers.

Phil Yates says *"Our vision is to have four or five Tabor Houses in Birmingham with other businesses joining us to contribute. All businesses surely have a responsibility to give back to their community. It cannot sit well with business leaders that we open a superb new Birmingham train station Grand Central and yet see alarming numbers of rough sleepers immediately outside!"*

*If more businesses worked together we could have a huge impact and significantly reduce rough sleeping in the country's Second City."*





## Spotlight on bigmoose Coffee Co

bigmoose Coffee Co opened its doors in Cardiff city centre in March 2018 after a successful crowd-funding campaign.

Run by father and daughter team Jeff and Chloe Smith, bigmoose has helped people out of homelessness through employment in the café and on into other jobs and education.

*“From working with people who have been sleeping rough, to helping people experiencing mental health issues, we’re offering a highly supportive route into stable employment. The long-term commitment we make to helping people means we’ve had staff that joined us as we opened who are still working with us 15 months later,” said Jeff.*

Responsible businesses around the city buy a range of products and services from bigmoose which, in turn, supports their social mission. Many companies are choosing to use the café to host their own breakfast or evening events, from seminars and workshops to staff celebrations and Christmas parties.

Going a step further, organisations such as the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Cardiff Tri and Nathaniel Cars have chosen bigmoose as their charity of the year and host many of their meetings and events at the café.

*Chloe explained: “As a social enterprise, the support we have from businesses in the city enables us to expand our work and the impact we can have.”*

## Match Giving

Match giving schemes are a great way to encourage staff to take part in fundraising activities as it shows that your business is behind them and will help them achieve their goals. Match giving is where your company makes a pledge to match any money raised by employees to help boost their charitable impact.

How you decide to match gifts is completely up to you so whether it’s a pound for pound match, a percentage or even a capped amount. Knowing that your staff can count on you for support will help them to reach and exceed their fundraising targets.

## In-kind donations

Businesses themselves could have access to goods or services charities need. This may include things like computer and IT equipment or desks the business is replacing. It could also be more substantial support such as providing office or meeting space or donating products and services to be distributed to beneficiaries. For all in-kind donations, it’s important that they are fulfilling a genuine need so consulting with charity partners to find out what would most benefit them and the people they support is essential.

## Alternative giving

Begging can be a contentious issue, causing concern to members of the public, businesses and their employees. It is an individual’s choice whether to give to someone directly however there are alternative giving schemes to provide another way to make a difference. Funds are collected and distributed through homeless services to provide help to homeless people. For example, [The Big Issue](#) is “an award-winning magazine offering employment opportunities to people in poverty”. Buying from a badged vendor is another way to directly support someone. Other schemes like [Change Into Action](#), offer a safe and



secure way for individuals to donate, with funds going directly to supporting rough sleepers.

## Campaigning and volunteering

Individuals may want to do more about the structural causes of homelessness and there are a number of ways they can support campaigns from national and local charities. Employers could support this through offering paid volunteer days or allowing groups of employees to share information about issues and opportunities they care about.

## Business networks

Businesses working together, whether nationally, locally or sector-by-sector, can have a greater impact on issues like homelessness than one business acting alone. Consider joining organisations such as Business in the Community, a sector-based programme or your Business Improvement District to have a collective impact.

### Spotlight on Suited for Success

Suited for Success started in 2015 as a CSR initiative launched by Gowling WLG and other professional services firms in the West Midlands. Gowling WLG convened the programme along with Lloyds Banking Group, PwC, Deutsche Bank, Shakespeare Martineau, and Anthony Collins and invited rising talents from within their business to take part.

Lorna Gavin, Head of Diversity, Inclusion, & Corporate Responsibility at Gowling WLG talks about the projects formation, she says: *“the goal was simple – bring together a small group of young professionals to form a volunteer consortium and identify a need for a disadvantaged community or group within the region. The members had to implement a scheme to meet that need and deliver a solution for it”*.

The group recognised that unemployment was a major issue in the area and as they explored the interplay between food poverty, lack of confidence, experience of homelessness and the need for decent clothing for interviews, they realised they could do something about it.

They partnered with Birmingham Central Foodbank and after an initial 6-month pilot project, Suited for Success became a registered charity in January 2016 with managing director Patricia White at the helm.

*“Suited for Success came along at the right time”* Patricia says *“We knew from running the food bank that people needed support getting into employment, so there was a real gap in the market.”*

Having a group of professional services firms on hand to help was crucial to help ‘Suited for Success’ move from being a pilot project to a standalone organisation in its own right.

This included pro bono legal support to acquire suitable premises, sign the lease, and register as a charity. The businesses continue to provide pro bono support to the charity as and when it is required with two of the original project team now sitting on their Board of Trustees as well.

Patricia White, now CEO at Suited for Success remarks how targeted support from businesses was crucial to their success: *“It’s important for business to find out what the needs are first. For lots of businesses that want to support homelessness, they automatically think the only help needed is to help at soup kitchens – which is obviously great – but skills based volunteering and strategic support is so much more useful at creating long term change.”*

# PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

Offering pathways to employment for people who have experienced homelessness can be as simple as working with a support organisation to arrange for your existing employees to volunteer their support with CV writing.

Many companies go further, working with partners such as Business in the Community to offer behind the scenes visits and work placements or to run bespoke employment programmes to bring people into their organisations.

Our BITC Employment Framework was initially developed to support our youth employment work and has now been broadened out to cover all excluded groups.

- **Inspire** is about breaking down barriers between people who have experienced homelessness and the workplace. This could be offering help with CVs and interview techniques, arranging a behind the scenes visit to your workplace or offering a work placement. See our employment programmes and campaigns at <https://www.bitc.org.uk/employment/>
- **Hire** is about removing structural barriers in your recruitment process such as unnecessary qualifications, confusing jargon and the criminal records tick box on application forms. Become a Ban the Box employer to remove barriers to work for people who have been homeless who have a criminal conviction at <https://www.bitc.org.uk/ban-the-box-sign-up-form/>
- **Grow** is about offering progression pathways, training and development. See our skills and

development page at

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/employment/>



## Spotlight on Ready for Work

ADI Group have supported Business in the Community's Ready for Work programme for over 5 years. The programme has evolved over time and currently works to support those at risk of homelessness, those who have experienced homelessness, and people with other barriers to work. Candidates are supported in their preparation for work by the partner organisations and then spend 2-4 weeks on a work experience placement at ADI Group.

Mari Docker, Group HR & CSR Manager says *"we have now employed 5 [Ready for Work clients] because their work ethic is incredible. It is now a part of our standard HR procedure and we continue to take two placements every quarter, every year"*.

This approach has now also been adopted by Wesleyan who have signed up for the 'Ready for Work' programme after wanting to be "more proactive, and less reactive" when it came to supporting homelessness. To date, Wesleyan have provided support to various local charities with everything from fundraising, volunteering hours, and yearly food drives.



Jess Wilkes-Reading, Corporate Responsibility Officer at Wesleyan, notes how the decision to start supporting people at risk of homelessness into employment was an easy one. *“There was no pushback”* she says *“It’s such a visible issue in Birmingham that everyone wants to do something about it, they just don’t know how. It’s about making clear to employees that homelessness is not a choice”*.

Since signing up to participate in the programme, Wesleyan have run a Lunch and Learn to inform colleagues about who they will be supporting and have developed two weeks of immersive work experience and practical support for their clients.

*“Don’t overthink it, try it, and then crack on with it”* Jess says, when asked for her top tip for businesses who want to support this issue. *“You can spend six months writing a proposal when you could have been having an impact. Also don’t force employees to get involved – we found it works best if we are really clear about what is going on and then give employees a variety of different ways in which they can support”*.

### **Offer employability support, work placements or work experience**

Businesses of all shapes and sizes can support people on their pathway to employment. A huge range of national and local charities, social enterprises and government schemes need businesses to work with them to improve employment outcomes. Businesses can offer staff volunteers to help with CVs and interview practice; provide a chance for candidates to see inside their business or offer valuable experience in the form of work placements. While work experience is often thought of as an option for young people, it can be valuable for anyone trying to get back into the world of work.

### **Spotlight on Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust**

‘Live and Work’ was a programme designed in partnership between Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust and St Basils, largely in response to the numbers of young homeless people who struggled to find affordable accommodation which enabled them to work. Assistant Director of Strategic Development, Jim Pollitt says “when we noticed this and then looked at our own workforce, I was startled by the lack of young people, and the lack of diversity – we didn’t seem to be employing anyone from the local area or from different social backgrounds, there was certainly no one that had experienced homelessness”.

An opportunity was spotted to re-purpose and refurbish a block of housing previously used as nurse’s accommodation to house young apprentices who were at risk of homelessness. The aim of all parties in the project was to provide preventative rather than reactive measures. As a result of various contributions, including a peppercorn lease, Empty Homes Capital Grant, pre-Apprenticeship programme funded by Health Education West Midlands and work carried out at cost by Keepmoat Regeneration (now Engie) with contributions from their supply chain, St Basils have been able to deflate the rent down to £42 per week which allows young people to live in safe, affordable accommodation without being reliant on benefits.

The project was highly innovative in that it moved away from the traditional purchaser/provider relationship and brought resources together to optimise outcomes for young people who were at risk of homelessness.



The collaborative work ethic between St Basils, Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust, and Keepmoat (now Engie) was pivotal to the success of the project. The working group met regularly to discuss the issues, progress and ensure that the project did not run over. Jean Templeton, Chief Executive at St Basils says this of their approach:

“This has only been made possible through a shared objective to enable young people to live and work and be benefit free; a whole community approach, the commitment and contributions of partners and thanks to funding from Empty Homes Capital Grant”.

Thanks to the close collaboration between the three organisations, the project was completed on time and in budget. The scheme has now supported over 70 young people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness to live and work and be benefit free. The project has yielded positive results so far with a £14 return to the public purse for every £1 invested in making the scheme work. However, whilst the refurbishments and logistics of the project were well met, integrating the young people into the Trust through apprenticeships was not always smooth sailing.

“We had difficulties internally as well; our Learning and Development staff and local managers had to adapt and take on a more pastoral approach when dealing with some of the young people.” Jim Pollitt says “We had to remove some of the barriers which prevented transformation happening. Recently, a sister said that one of the young people on the programme ended up as one of the best healthcare assistants she’s worked with. It’s a learning experience for both parties and fundamentally it’s about building trust – these young people have had bad experiences so we need to start building that trust from day one”.

A recent resident of the programme, Christopher says “Hallam is home for me! I have been guided to be independent, I’ve gained skills and confidence. I have a career and I only have to cross over the road for work, I have saved money due to the affordable low rent. Living at Hallam is warm, supportive and I am grateful to St Basils and the project staff for believing in me”.

### **Offer apprenticeships to all ages and jobs through charities or specialist recruiters**

Apprenticeships are no longer just for young people and can be a good way for people who are changing careers or getting back into work to learn on the job. Find out more about employing an apprentice at [www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice](http://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice).

There are also a range of charities, social enterprises and specialist recruiters who have candidates actively looking for work. Consider advertising your vacancies directly through them or entering a strategic partnership to support their candidates into roles in your organisation.

**“Now I have hope – I believe in myself again, and I have dreams for the future to work at head office. I’ve been on such a journey so far.” – BITC programme participant**



## ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP

The following are just a small selection of organisations that offer support nationally.

### BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Business in the Community (BITC)

BITC is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business. Our employment programmes support some of society's most disadvantaged people to enter employment, with business involvement every step of the way.

[www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk) | 020 7566 8650

E: [Nicola.burton@bitc.org.uk](mailto:Nicola.burton@bitc.org.uk)

### CRISIS

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. They offer one-to-one support, advice and courses for homeless people in 12 areas across England, Scotland and Wales through their Crisis Skylight Centres. Together with homeless people and Crisis supporters, they campaign for the changes needed to end homelessness for good.

They also have a 'Help to Rent' database which is a list of local organisations which can help people to find a private rented tenancy. This can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/HelpToRent>

[crisis.org.uk](http://crisis.org.uk) | 0300 636 1967

E: [enquiries@crisis.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@crisis.org.uk)

### HOMELESS LINK

The national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England, Homeless Link works to make services better and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness. They run a searchable directory of local homeless services in England:

<https://tinyurl.com/HomelessWise>  
[homeless.org.uk](http://homeless.org.uk) | 020 7840 4430

E: [info@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:info@homelesslink.org.uk)

### SHELTER

Shelter helps millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through advice, support and legal services. They campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to them for help.

[shelter.org.uk](http://shelter.org.uk) | 0344 515 2000

E: [info@shelter.org.uk](mailto:info@shelter.org.uk)

### STREETLINK

StreetLink exists to help end rough sleeping by enabling members of the public to connect people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them. Members of the public can use the service to alert local authorities and homelessness organisations to people sleeping rough in their area.

[streetlink.org.uk](http://streetlink.org.uk) | 0300 500 0914

### LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local councils have a duty to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to stay in their home or find accommodation. They may also have a duty to house people.

Shelter has comprehensive guidance which can be accessed here: <http://tiny.cc/CouncilGuidance>

### WMCA HOMELESSNESS TASKFORCE

The task force aims to prevent accommodation crises, wherever possible, through universal and targeted prevention, to intervene quickly and effectively with crisis prevention and relief, and to ensure the best pathway to recovery, enabling people to move on to a settled home.

E: [homelessness@wmca.org.uk](mailto:homelessness@wmca.org.uk)

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Thanks to our Employment & Skills Leadership Team





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The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



**Business in the Community**

137 Shepherdess Walk  
London N17RQ

[www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk)

**Chairman:** Jeremy Darroch

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